DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 387 PS 012 657

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TITLE Mother Daughter Relationships: From Infancy to Adulthood. Unit for Child Studies Selected Papers Number 15.
INSTITUTION New South Wales Univ., Kensington (Australia). School of Education.
PUB DATE 24 Jul 81
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at a seminar at the Unit for Child Studies, University of New South Wales (Kensington, Australia, July 24, 1981). For other papers in this series, see ED 204 029-037 and PS 012 652-660.
AVAILABLE FROM Unit for Child Studies, School of Education, University of New South Wales, P.O. Box 1, Kensington, NSW 2033, Australia ($2.00; payment should be made in Australian dollars).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Daughters; *Family Problems; Guidelines; Individual Development; Males; *Mothers; *Parent Child Relationship; Power Structure; *Psychological Patterns; *Self Concept; Sex Role; Social Problems; Social Structure; Therapy
IDENTIFIERS Dominance Hierarchies; Oppression; *Patriarchal Societies

ABSTRACT

Topics related to characteristics of mother/daughter relationships in contemporary patriarchal societies are discussed in this seminar paper. The first section describes cases intended to illustrate ways patriarchal social structures limit contemporary mother/daughter relationships, provides a brief historical contrast, and suggests possible explanations of how and why mother/daughter relationships become ambivalent and sometimes negative. In the second section, the contemporary context of mother/daughter relationships is examined. Topics discussed include patriarchal fears and contempt of women, restricted patriarchal models for female identity, and outcomes of maternal guilt and ambivalence, as well as daughters' rage at mothers and the threat of men to the mother/daughter relationship. Images of women in literature are briefly discussed. Against this background the third section discusses the development of self and identity in the mother/daughter relationship from birth through the preschool years, middle childhood, and adolescence, to identity in young adulthood. Problems of sex role autonomy and identity development in middle childhood, nurturance, identity development in preadolescence and sex differences in parental response to adolescent autonomy are among the topics discussed. The fourth and final section offers suggestions for mothers seeking help with problems in their relationships with their daughters. (Author/RH)

ED212387

PS012657

Selected Papers

Number 15

Unit for Child Studies

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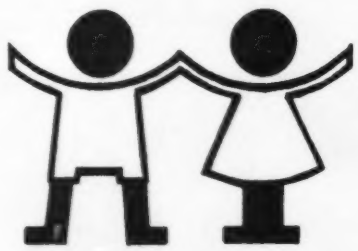

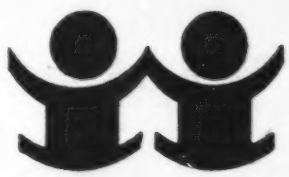

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MOTHER DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS
FROM INFANCY TO ADULTHOOD

DR SHELLEY PHILLIPS

MOTHER DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

From Infancy to Adulthood

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I BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

There is extensive research on father/son and mother/son relationship but very little on mother/daughter relationships. This is not surprising since psychology and psychiatry are status quo preserving subjects and understandably in a patriarchal society have been oriented toward studying male development and the male condition; their theories, their concepts, and their research have tended to regard the male perspective as the universal reality and male norms as "normal adjustment" by which women can be assessed (Phillips, 1980; Gilligan, 1979). Thus, psychology, with but a few exceptions, has based its findings on but half of reality. As a consequence, it is but half a science.

I shall try to look at some aspects of the other half of reality and, in particular, mother/daughter relationships. I shall review some of the major points made in the very limited literature on the subject and cull psychological research for concepts and findings relevant to mother/daughter relationships, although these may not have originally been directed to this end. I shall also include some general observations from my own research in this area. The paper begins with two extracts from a case study which highlights what Adrienne Rich (1977) describes as the exquisite suffering of contemporary mother/daughter relationships; this is followed by a brief look at the historical evidence for other times when relationships appear to have been more positive, and a search for some possible explanations of how and why these relationships became ambivalent and sometimes negative. Psychological development of the female self concept will then be examined, and finally, some positive suggestions for mother/daughter interaction will be made.

Where issues have been discussed already in other publications, the detail will not be repeated; the reference alone will be given. This includes topics such as fathers as nurturers, the over emphasis on the role of the mother in psychology and psychiatry, and styles of parenting. One final point - the seminar will concentrate on everyday relationships and general trends and not special problems such as pathology, child abuse, and incest, because the psychology and politics of these warrant examination in a seminar devoted to them exclusively. Also, I feel most of you are interested in knowing more about mother/daughter relations in "ordinary" and reasonably nurturing families.

However, because it says something about the violence in which many seemingly "ordinary" mothers and daughters live, it is pertinent to think about a case that has recently hit the headlines - that of a mother initially sentenced to life imprisonment for killing her husband who had violently sexually abused his five young daughters over a period of 15 years. The revelations of the daughters in the case remind us that females, mothers and daughters, are not

infrequently controlled, subjugated and humiliated by violence and sexual abuse in our community; as is often the case, these daughters were set one against the other and the mother against the daughters by the manipulative and brutal threats of this man. He allowed his daughters a brief and occasional sense of power which made them even more vulnerable in his hands and confused them greatly. What is not unusual and, therefore, even more distressing, is that some of the social workers who were asked to help in the case appeared to have uncritically applied a general theory in male-oriented psychiatry, namely, that where there is incest, the mother complies, or the child wants it. These theories have little insight into the psychological effects of social, economic and political pressures which may force some women to comply; nor do they even begin to understand how children become projections of male needs and that these projections may be interpreted in paternalistic theories as the child's needs in the same way as women's needs have been interpreted in male terms. These theories are generally cynical about the mother's complete ignorance of the incest between father and daughter, yet, in this case, as in others, it was reported that the mother was unaware of the incest because the father violenty threatened the daughters to silence and divided them from their mother. Nevertheless, at least two of the daughters were apparently cruelly persuaded by the social workers that their mother had complied. The violence and manipulation which was characteristic of this case, and others, gives some insight into why many daughters are more angry with their mothers for not protecting them than with the fathers for assaulting them. These outcomes, which apply equally to less socially abhorrent violations of mother/daughter relationships will be discussed later.

A Contemporary Daughter from an "Ordinary" Family

The following are two excerpts from a diary provided by a teenage girl whose pseudonym is Patricia:

i. "I am fourteen and my life is all to do with what I do at school: I do not like it at all. The female teachers are all frustrated spinsters who hate me and the other girls are silly like all girls. I just watch them getting around with their fat legs and boobs and think what a messy lot they are. The only friend I have is Phil. He's my boyfriend. I'd feel terrible if I didn't have a boyfriend. The girls who don't have a boyfriend are ugly and stupid - nobody wants them.

I despise my family except for my Aunt Jane. She's my mother's youngest sister and has a great personality. I wish mine was as great as hers. She's always had lots of boyfriends and is fun to be with. She listens to what I have to say. I hate my mother. This is natural because Dad says mothers and daughters don't get on as well as fathers and daughters. Aunt Jane says my mother is good looking and kind and sensible. She is too, but I'm an ungrateful pig and I hate her. She's always stopping me from staying out late, or drinking, or going out with boys she doesn't know. She'd murder me if she knew I was having sex with Phil.

ii. When I got my period I was 12. I was scared and embarrassed. I was terrified my mother would tell my father and brothers who would tease me. I felt unclean.

These two extracts are not uncommon to teenage girls and tell us a lot about the female condition in contemporary society: ambivalence about her sex, and her body, disgust at female biology, dependence on the male for feelings of self worth, and guilt about her behaviour toward her mother. The attitudes of distaste for her own femaleness were later revealed to be the basis for Pat-

ricia's conflict with her mother. The mother, described as a "good mother" had poor self esteem; the father felt superior to women. Most women, most mothers and daughter relationships are tinged by these or similar negativisms and guilt. Is it a necessary condition? One way of examining this question is to explore the past history of women and children, previously much neglected, in favour of the exploits of men; such explorations may help us to understand our present human condition and why it is as it is.

WOMEN CENTRED SOCIETIES

Adrienne Rich (1977), after much examination of archeological records, suggests that there have been pre-patriarchal societies in history which have shared certain kinds of woman-centred beliefs and woman centred social organisations. In these societies women were venerated in several aspects, the primal one being maternal and, in the mythology, sculpture, art and folk tales of these ancient eras, they are presented as beautifully strong, neither young nor old, and as self possessed and calm. Unlike the female of the much later Christian period, who is absorbed in contemplations of the child at her breast, she is herself even when nurturing an infant. She exists not to seduce or please man, but to assert herself. Thus, women of this period must have felt constantly validated by these images which asserted that women are primary, awesome and central. Women are portrayed, not, as is contemporarily the case, as insipid or trivial, nor as sex symbols. Erich Neumann (1972) cites numerous examples to suggest that the deeply reverenced art of pottery making was invented by women and as much part of the creative activity of the time as the making of a child. Pottery made possible the long term storage of oils and grains and cooking, all of which had a civilising influence. In the primordal era the art of pottery was revered as a feminine force and transformation.

Mother/Daughter Relationships in Women-Centred Societies

In these pre-patriarchal societies mother relationships and status were far more important than the wife status. The foundation of all social bonds was seen as the one between mother and child, and from women's child rearing function there flowed a natural division of labour. Above all, the mother/daughter relationship was regarded as most sacred; the rituals of art, creativity and birth were handed on from mother to daughter and there were temples, rites and goddesses sacred to them.

The patriarchal society acknowledges the mother/son relationship and the loss of the son has been a frequent tragic theme in our literature. There has been much less reverence for the mother/daughter relationship. Again, history suggests that this was not always so. As indicated in the Eleusinian mysteries of 12,000 and 11,000 BC, mothers and daughters not only had a special place as creators of life, and pottery, and art, but a special bond between them, such that their separation or loss was seen to be a tragedy of epic proportions as in the tragedy of Persephone.

The Right to Seclusiveness in Pre-Patriarchal Societies

While the fear of menstrual blood is a special male fear of feminine biology, to be discussed later, it is also suggested that the tendency to isolate women from men at the time of menstruation may have originated in self-imposed segregation by women in ancient times (Neumann, 1972). The Jungian psychologist Esther Harding suggests that contemporary woman may still need to use her period as a time for withdrawal into privacy and self reflection.

Similarly, the incest taboo may have been established by women in the pre-patriarchal period in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of women by the men living closest to them. Although some of these ancient practices appear to have survived in patriarchal society, the deliberate withdrawl of women from men or their self segregation, as in respite from sexual activity, spinsterhood, unmarried motherhood, or political movements such as those of the suffragets or feminists has generally been seen as threatening subversion to men and hence, the latter have tended to savagely victimise and denigrate such attempts.

Tactics are well known; for example, of the spinster: "she's neurotic - she needs a man but couldn't get one!" and, until recently, the unmarried mother and her "illegitimate"child were savagely condemned by the patriarchally controlled church and legal system. Just consider the illogicality of the term "illegitimate". Illegitimate to the father-dominated family yes, but certainly not to the mother or the child itself. On the other hand, the exclusion of women from men's groups is rationalised by paternalistic and patronising arguments.

These controversies are examined in the archeological evidence (Rich, 1977). Their considerations help us to reflect more objectively upon some aspects of the male/female and female/female relationships which we tend to take for granted or as in the nature of things in our society.

CHANGED ATTITUDES TO WOMEN IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETIES. WHY?

Why was the change to the patriarchal society accompanied by hostility toward women as exemplified in the genocide of female infants in ancient times, the medieval witch massacres, the contemporary mother-in-law jokes, sadistic pornography and many other ways. And why is it that today it is commonly held that there are special strains between mother and daughter and that of father and daughter tends to be more affectionate and stable? What are the consequences for women in our society of developing in and through patriarchal social relations?

Economics

Frederick Engels has discussed the "subjugation" of women in patriarchal society and believes their inferior status coincides with the beginning of private ownership (Phillips, 1979, pp 94-5). While the theory has currency, the stress on economics to the exclusion of emotional and psychological factors reflects a male point of view engendered by the suppression of these aspects in the socialisation of males in our society (Phillips, 1980, Part II, p 1).

Power and Envy

As Rich (1977) sees it, not only were economics important but psychologically man invested in power to compensate for the inability to create life. His identity became power over others, beginning with a woman and her children. She equates women with colonised people and like all colonised people they came to be described as weak, incapable of self government, ignorant, irrational and in need of firm control. Rich sees the extolled male virtues of "detachment", "objectivity", "sanity", as willed ignorance of human inner psychic life and, in particular, that of women. She believes men are victims of "moral stupidity" and possessed of an "inner chaos" and "emptiness". This philosophical feminism of Rich has some support in the psychological research which has tried to assess socialising influences upon men; the psychoanalytic studies of male envy are an

example.

Karen Horney's work as a psychoanalyst, led her to believe that men fear women's power to create life and as a consumer of their sexual energies (1967). She also suggests that despite male dominance in every other sphere, a residual envy and resentment remains which has resulted in the devaluation of the feminine and a dichotomy between it and motherhood. Thus, we have the sex symbol on one hand and the mother on the other.

Bruno Bettelheim has analysed male initiation rituals as outgrowths of male envy of woman's power to create life, and demonstrates that males try to imitate and magically share in the physical powers of females (1968). It is interesting, for example, that female impersonation has been a studied concert art among men but there are but few male impersonators among women. Rich (1977), quoting Suzanne Arms, also suggests that the highly dubious technology of obstetrics and proliferation of hysterectomies is the gradual attempt by man to extricate the process of birth from women and call it his own. Rich also believes the emphasis on sterilising women in the third world, as a means of population control, rather than devoting much more time to the study of new ways to produce and distribute food reflects a male need to control female productive power. Similarly, it is interesting that the emphasis on birth control in our society has, until recently, tended to concentrate on control of female productivity rather than male fertility.

II THE FEMALE IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

THE BASES OF MOTHER/DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

With the historical background in mind, the situation today can be examined contextually. Since relationships occur in a cultural and psychological context and not in isolation and despite the changes of the last decades, we need to keep in mind that we live in a patriarchal society and that this is a prism through which mother/daughter relationships are reflected. They are profoundly effected by the process.

PATRIARCHAL FEARS AND CONTEMPT

Male Dread of the Female

Woman the vampire, controlling, castrating, and guilt-provoking are some of the power symbols associated with woman in patriarchal society. These male fantasies of the power of women are probably rooted in infancy, and have found expression in tales, legends and art since antiquity. Women have tended to close their eyes to this male dread or so incorporate it into their self view that they do not recognise its true nature. Hence, for example, since antiquity, women have accepted as just and allowed it to define their self view, the male hatred of overt strength in women such that it is seen as unsexed, frigid, castrating or controlling. There is a preference for dependent, malleable, feminine women.

Karen Horney (1967) sees it as remarkable that women have for so long overlooked men's secret dread of women. She suggests that behind women's obliviousness of this male dread lies "anxiety and the impairment of self respect".

Furthermore, however much women try to render themselves pleasing and non-threatening, they still, to some extent, bear the imprint of the feared aspect of woman. "Since politically and socially men do wield immense power over women, it is unnerving to realise that your mate or employer may also fear you" (Rich, 1977, p 56). And, if a woman hopes to find not a master but a lover and an equal, how is she to meet this dread?

> "If it brings to her intimations of a power inherent in her sex, that power is perceived as hostile, destructive, controlling, malign - and the very idea of power is poisoned for her - thus women's primary experience of power till now has been triply negative; we have experienced men's power as oppression; we have experienced our own vitality and independence as somehow threatening to men, and even when behaving with "feminine" passivity, we have been aware of masculine fantasies of our potential destructiveness." (Rich, 1976, p 56)

Male Ambivalence Toward the Female Body

Male ambivalence toward female bodies is abundantly clear in psychiatric records, indicating sexual attraction and repulsion; it appears in art (Picasso, for example), literature (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky), and advertising. We are so used to it, we take it for granted and do not recognise the underlying fear in the sick jokes about castrating females, or the "boob" jokes. The following case of Joanne is not uncommon:

> I was 23 when I was married and a virgin. My mother had been a bit of a suffragette and my father was a relatively progressive male. I knew men found me attractive and women admired me. One day my husband Bill, and I, were sitting in a club lounge which had a display of art. There was one Picasso type picture of a woman with bits and pieces juxtaposed in all directions. "That's a jolly good picture", said Bill, "Women's bodies are a mess - bits stuck on the front, wide bottoms, blobs of fat in the wrong places, painted mouths and eyes - its all a great jumble." We were not long married and I realised with a mortal blow to my self esteem that his view of me had not been entirely what I thought. I suddenly remembered a time when I was eight and had been swimming in the river at home and was getting dressed with some small girl friends. Some boys hid in the bushes and came running and jeering at us for being "funny looking fat tarts with no pricks". I remember another occasion when a gang of boys grabbed my girlfriend aged 8 and pulled her pants down to look at her. "Isn't that awful", they shouted and went away sniggering and sneering. While I felt angry at them, I also felt ashamed to be female from their attitude.

Stories like this are innumerable, some of them worse, some of them more subtly destroying of female confidence in her body, or encouraging a distaste for certain aspects of it. These denigrations are gradually built into the self concept and are the seat of some common self rejective disturbances in mother/daughter relationships. In extreme circumstances there are serious disturbances of development and rejection of the female body self concept. For example, in some cases, anorexia nervosa or self starvation may develop when young girls fear developing breasts. There is usually a history of paternal rejection of things female in such cases.

Thus, in patriarchal society, women have to battle to maintain respect and affection for their own bodies and to not view them as unclean or as depersonalised sex objects. A woman who feels pride in her female body will not visit self depreciation upon her female child. She will wordlessly transmit to her daughter that a woman's body is a good and healthy place to live (Rich, 1977,

p 248).

> "Until a strong line of love, confirmation and example stretches from mother to daughter, from woman to woman across the generations, woman will still be wandering in the wilderness." (Rich, 1977, p 249)

Rejection of Feminine Traits as Part of Male Development

Most of us do not remember much of our childhood, although there is evidence that many children are capable of doing so. Early childhood in particular, is generally forgotten or repressed; memory has a little to do with it but there are also social and psychological issues at stake. This is the period when women are powerful in their children's lives. It is also a period when the female skills of human bonding, sociability, and interdependence are most characteristic of development.

A study of boys in middle childhood (Phillips, 1979) in Sydney found a great deal of anxiety in males about their own femininity and fierce denigration and rejection of it and hence, females in general. Other studies suggest that years 7 - 11 are the most crucial in respect of depression and suicidal behaviour in boys (Phillips, 1981a). This appears to reinforce the idea that the repression of emotion and tenderness and the encouragement of aggression and competition which is characteristic of the early years of school and wider peer contact, is a disturbing process for boys.

This repression and self denial is an essential aspect of male personality development in patriarchy. Male identity depends on rejection of the mother's characteristics (don't be a mummy's boy), and the female aspects of the male self. Since women identify with men, this repressive process is possibly generalised in female children. While the cases are, as yet, not numerous, I have noted that females with good respect for their femininity repress their childhood memories in relationship to their mother much less. This point will be discussed further in the development of the self concept in Section III.

RESTRICTED PATRIARCHAL MODELS FOR FEMALE IDENTITY

a) Motherhood and Maternal Instinct

In patriarchal style feudal, capitalistic and industrial society, the wifely, mothering aspects of woman have been emphasised to the exclusion of other aspects of being a person or a self. The emphasis is partly based on the division of labour: women supplied sons to fight in the battles of power between clans and nations which have been a feature of patriarchal society and/or they supplied factory workers in industrial society. The restriction of female development is probably also based on men's needs for nurturance, a secure base and sexual gratification. The institution of marriage appears well-suited to male needs and the necessity for it has been projected onto women, such that the latter, as a mirror reflection, have taken it as a desired state upon themselves, despite the emphasis, until recently, that no "nice" woman enjoys sex and despite the drudgery of domestic poverty and of child bearing relieved only in the past few decades. The doubtful martyrdom of motherhood has been well discussed in feminist literature (Rich, 1977).

In the book *Love Plus: The History of Maternal Love*, Elisabeth Bodinter, a French philosopher goes further and suggests that maternal love and instinct, is but a 200 year old myth, invented to encourage a consistent supply of factory workers in the beginning of industrial capitalism. The cult of motherhood was

enforced on women to ensure this supply. She draws on the work of Lloyd Demause (1974) which amply demonstrates indifference to child mortality and infanticide until the nineteenth century, hence the exceedingly low survival rate of infants until modern times. I am not sure that Bodinter's views on motherly love and its recency are well documented for she judges the past by contemporary western standards. The point is rather that the maternal or paternal instinct appears to be induced by nurturing the infant, and the research indicates that it is equally apparent in men when they are as exposed to infants as mothers are (Phillips, 1980).

b) Needing to be Needed

An important aspect of the pressure on women to restrict personality development to the mothering role is that many spend their life trying to prove they are good at it and extend it to not only mothering children, but men in general. Mothering men makes such women in patriarchal society feel strong and wanted. They need the neediness of others to be able to feel their own strength. Deprived of this role when the children leave home (to be discussed later) or after divorce or the death of a spouse, these women disintegrate as persons. Thus, dependency on being needed is a model, a spectacle and demand which can create special tensions between mothers and daughters.

c) Sex Symbol

Patriarchal castration of female personality principally offers women but two alternatives: motherhood or an emphasis on the sexual attraction to meet the urgency of male needs. The sex symbol aspect of womanhood which excludes personality and character has become more and more salient as the need to emphasise motherhood for population growth declines. It also reflects the increasing shallowness and emptiness of the male socialisation process in our own society. The plastic women of the advertising world, the "dumb blonde", the Miss World contests, and the current trend to the sexual exploitation of the young female adolescent whose character is yet sufficiently unformed to be in any way threatening to her exploiters - these degraded models are further restrictions on respectful personality development which is an essential basis of good relationships between mother and daughter.

OUTCOMES

Maternal Guilt and Ambivalence

Am I doing what is right? Am I doing enough? Am I doing too much? The institution of motherhood in patriarchal society places unrealistic demands on mothers. As a result all mothers feel more or less guilty of having failed their children and our society blames and accuses them. Whenever a child has behaviour problems, patriarchal psychiatry and psychology emphasises the role of the mother. Yet fathers too, play a significant role by neglect, ineffectualness, lack of support, constant absence, or by reinforcing the mother's behaviour (Phillips, 1979, pp 147-151; Phillips, 1980, Part II, pp 2-4).

Women in general have not protested assertively about this unbearable load of human responsibility and the subsequent guilt. They have often felt angry but, as a result of their education, women deal with anger by repressing it and then turning it against themselves. They take into themselves the cultural belief that all misfortunes in human psychological development are theirs and blame themselves for it. At the same time they act out their conflicts with their daughters so these become the daughter's conflicts as well.

Woman the Victim and Matrophobia

The mother's bondage is often the seat of mother/daughter conflict. Rejecting the mother can be an attempt to reject and overcome the victim, the martyr in ourselves - a major aspect of the psychology of women in patriarchal society.

Rich suggests that hatred of the mother may actually be a fear that one may become like her and takes on her degradations, restrictions, and self hatred, her over absorptions in housework, chronic worry over children, and martyrdom to the demands of her male partner. Tnus, women who identify themselves primarily as mothers may threaten those who feel inadequate in the role or who wish to assert themselves in other areas as well.

> "Many daughters live in rage at their mothers for having accepted, too readily and passively whatever comes.
> ... A mother's victimisation does not merely humiliate her, it mutilates the daughter who watches her for clues as to what it means to be a woman." (Rich, 1977, pp 2466-7).

Some psychoanalysts suggest that the daughter's rage at her mother is likely to arise from the mother having relegated her to second class status while looking to the son or father for the fulfillment of her own thwarted needs.

Mothers as victims have carried their guilt and self hatred over into their daughter's experience. Thus, in the past, not only the father but the mother cast out the girl who was raped or who bore a child out of wedlock. The mother, due to her education, knows she would feel guilty so she tells her daughter she is guilty. The woman so demoralised by her own victimisation, cruelly submits to the victimisation of her daughter as in the nature of things and as seen in the following case.

> Mrs M's husband sexually abused their 8-year-old daughter. Ashamed for him, protective of him, and ashamed on account of her daughter for the violaton of her sexuality, she said to the eight-year-old, "Don't ever tell anyone this has happened!" Thus, the shocked and distressed child, sexually subjugated by the father, did not obtain support and protection from the mother. Not understanding the pressures on her mother, bewildered by her own degradation, she understandably grew angry about being female. The anger grew into self loathing and self rejection, and ultimately, created an enormous gulf between this mother and daughter.

This self hate among women who are, in fact, the victims, and loathing for the mother who is also a victim, is not unusual.

The Threat to Men of the Mother/Daughter Relationship

Rich and Margaret Mead (1975) suggest that because of biologically alike bodies and biochemical affinities, there is the deepest mutuality between the mother and the female child. Yet, in patriarchal religion, art, literature, and psychoanalytic theory, it is the mother and son who appear as the eternal, determinative dyad. This is not surprising since these have been predominantly produced or selected by men (Phillips, 1981b). Rich believes the one-sided emphasis is also because, like most close relationships between women, the relationship between mother and daughter has been profoundly threatening to men. Evidence for the divisive effect of patriarchal attitudes on woman/woman and mother/daughter relationships in every-day families is amply available, as is

the evidence for the divisive behaviour of many of the "best" fathers, albeit unwittingly; the problem is, psychology and psychiatry have not, as yet, systematised and thoroughly researched the relevant clinical data, having preferred to theorise about the responsibilities and effects of mothers. One of the most extreme of the divisive manoeuvres at the societal level, has been that of female infanticide; females were the primary victims of infanticide from antiquity to the middle ages (Demause, 1974). Thus, a woman learned to dread giving birth to a female like herself while the father might see himself twice born in his son.

Women in Literature

There are a few studies in literature of mother/daughter relationships which highlight the impact of patriarchy on mother/daughter relationships. *To The Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf is one of the few novels in which a woman has portrayed her mother as a central figure. Like many mother's Virginia's spent her energies primarily on caring for her husband and the mother in the novel, Mrs Ramsey, does not like women very much and her life is spent in attunement to male needs. She is dependent on men as they on her.

In order to study nursing, Florence Nightingale was forced to battle, in the person of her mother, the restrictive conventions of upper class Victorian womanhood in which she saw women going mad "for want of something to do" (Cecil Woodham Smith, 1951).

There is a tendency to see Sylvia Plaths close relationship with her mother, expressed in her *Letters Home*, as the source of Sylvia Plath's early suicide attempt. Rich (1977) feels that, on the contrary, it was her father who set the example of self destructiveness.

Heartening is Carroll Smith Rosenberg's study of the letters of American women of 35 families from the 1760s to the 1880s. She found networks of long-lasting female, tender-developed friendships to be characteristic of the period. There was a female world distinct from male concerns in which women and mothers and daughters gave each other support. That closeness, as a means of maintaining self respect in patriarchal society diminished in the twentieth century as the world of women succumbed to mass propaganda and advertising which trivialised womanhood and increasingly set women against women. Another problem is that friendship and extended family closeness was broken by the constant migration from place to place as women followed their menfolk to new workplaces in industrial society.

Mother and daughter are ambivalent charged concepts in our society. Patriarchal attitudes have encouraged females to split and polarise the mother/daughter image and to project unwanted guilt, anger, and shame on each other. Women have been made taboo to women, not just sexually, but as comrades. Only in breaking this taboo will mothers and daughters and woman-kind establish their good relationships.

Against this background let us look at the developmental process in the mother/daughter relationship from birth to young adulthood.

III DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF AND IDENTITY IN FEMALES

The Crux of the Relationship Between Mothers and Daughters

INFANCY

It is believed that a newborn baby does not experience itself as separate from its environment and caretakers; there is no sense of demarcation between its body and itself and others. The differentiation process involves physiological maturation and activity whereby the infant becomes able to grasp, sit up and touch separate others; this development happens in relation to the primary caretaker which, in our society, is usually the mother. The sense of separateness develops through experiences of the mother's departure and return, and through frustration. Differentiation of self begins in the early months when the infant learns that the mother is a separate being whose activities do not always coincide with just what the infant wants.

At the same time, good and bad aspects of mothering become part of self; the baby incorporates how the mother behaves towards her as part of self being. Attachment theory is relevant here for it suggests that the baby develops trust in the mother or caretaker as a consistent provider of security in the form of bodily comfort, cuddling and food. According to the theories of Bowlby, Erikson and Shaffer, trust formed in the first years of infancy is basic to the ability to trust and love significant others throughout life. Although recent research suggest that deficiencies of babyhood may be rectified by consistent and constant loving later, it nevertheless remains that the early establishment of trust appears to make for smoother emotional development. At the same time the baby learns about herself as a reciprocal in the provision of pleasure and comfort. This occurs at the feeling level, for babies think through their bodies and their senses and not in abstractions. They cannot intend in the adult sense, despite the prevailing folklore to the contrary. The continuity of the relationship with the mother or caretaker leads to the building of a sense of continuous bodily self in the baby: if the relationship is warm the baby feels and senses a good bodily self, if not, the beginnings of a negative self view is laid.

Thus, self develops through the baby internalising feelings about others towards her. It also involves feelings (at first at the bodily level) that one is able to generate comfort to the mother. Very important in this process is the capacity of the mother or caretaker to respond to the baby as though she is a separate and spontaneous being and not just an extension of the mother's or the caretaker's own selfness. Some caretakers become anxiously absorbed in their babies, as a hope for the love they missed out on with their own mothers or fathers, or are not receiving from their husbands, or as a bolster for their poor self esteem. They see their babies as a projection of themselves and the baby is inhibited from developing an independent self by negative double-bind mechanisms; for example, if the baby cries unduly it may be seen as deliberately distressing the mother - not as acting independently and motivated by its own discomfort. Egocentric projections take many forms. While this is a risk in any mother/baby relationship in our society, it seems especially so for

mothers and daughters. It is easier to project oneself into one of similar body and sex.

Thus, generally, the expectations of mothers and the attitudes of her mother about herself and to the baby as a responding, spontaneously separate individual is the basis of the earliest differentiation of self. Because fathers play such a small role in infant care in our society, we cannot tell whether this may be an important omission in developing self awareness. Perhaps the interaction with a body that is male and has different reactions would enhance differentiation. However, given that women are primary caretakers in our society, rightly or wrongly, what is also happening in this situation is that the child does not at first see the mother as an independent self but as a provider and a comforter for him or her; the child sees the mother as an extension of itself.

Fathers appear to be involved to but a limited extent in this process, if at all, given our society's preference for mother-dominated infant rearing. Further, women in our society, trained as they are, have little difficulty with this role. Men, because they are not trained in the nurturing role often have enormous difficulty with it and in my own research on child rearing practices in Sydney, it was men, more often than women, who attributed manipulative and controlling intentions, well beyond the level of their cognitive development, to infants and small children. In this way, they reject the child's or infant's dependency, and saw them as extension of their own hostility and anxiety in this situation and, therefore, as justifying it.

Another aspect of the mother as primary caretaker is that the infant probably experiences her as overwhelming and denying. This often complicates later relationships, as the experience tends to be incorporated and survives. Men, as non-nurturers of infants, are not necessarily seen as overwhelming and denying in the same way. The best adjustment to this problem is probably equal parenting.

PRE-SCHOOL AND MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

In the pre-school years separation of the concept of self develops further as the child learns that its thoughts are its own, and private, and not necessarily common to others (Phillips, 1979, p 139). After this, there is a great advance in self concept development and it begins to embrace not only name, age, whether one has a mother to look after one and physical attributes, but also skills and abilities (Fahey, 1980). Much of the process is still one of the child incorporating the repeated views of significant others about his or her attributes and ability into the self view: "You are a good girl", "You are pretty", "You are very intelligent and helpful", "You are especially good at swimming and art".

Sometimes, much-needed positive appraisals and realistic feedbacks are missing, and the child does not accurately incorporate her abilities into her self view. Almost unwittingly, parents, teachers, and playmates, may induce a child to see itself as clumsy, stupid, or inferior. Parents, in particular, are in a position to build traits and characteristics into a child's self concept by repetitive descriptions (Phillips, 1979). Certainly, the child brings something to the situation, but the self concept is largely a learnt process transmitted by the appraisals and comments of significant others during development.

What I have said here applies as equally to boys as girls. However, for good mother/daughter relationships the building of self esteem (Fahey, 1980;

Maron, 1979) in daughters in this period is crucial because, as has already been discussed, the female self concept is at special risk in our society. Nowadays, most girls in early primary school seem to have good self esteem (Hall & Halberstadt, 1980). In the later primary school years and in co-ed schools, this self esteem often diminishes (Hall & Halberstadt, 1980; Phillips, 1979). The more girls are interacting with boys, the less their respect for their femaleness seems to be (Phillips, 1979).

Girls begin to be at risk for decreased self esteem when they are mixing with boys who are learning to reject the female aspect of themselves and, therefore, in their anxiety, tend to denigrate female characteristics in general (Phillips, 1979). As discussed extensively elsewhere (Fahey, 1980; Marton, 1979; Hamachek 1978) good self esteem is essential to self acceptance and acceptance of others. People who like themselves like others. The maintenance of self esteem and respect for one's sex is, therefore, primary in good mother/daughter relationships.

Sex Role Autonomy and Identity Development in Middle Childhood

In middle childhood, children become clearer about their sex role identity which, in our society, is clearly differentiated from the other sex; for boys and girls, the processes are not only different in relation to behaviours but in relation to the mother. Since the beginning of the concept of self has involved incorporating the mother's feelings, the boy, particularly in the early school years (7-11 years), has to reject the incorporated female self and establish a self that is not female, and, as indicated earlier, this can be a period in which boys are at greater risk for depression and suicide (Phillips, 1981a).

> "Because of the primacy of the mother in early life and because of the absence, as a source of self development, of a male nurturer who is as salient for him as the female figures, learning what it is to be masculine for boys 'comes to mean learning to be not feminine, or not womanly'." (Chodorow, 1978)

This necessity to reject and split off the earlier self, incorporated from the mother, is not an aspect of self concept development for the female primary school child. Thus, the sense of continuity and security is less disturbed. This is a positive force for good self concept development and needs to be emphasised more in studying female psychology.

Nevertheless, because of the sexual difference and the demands for independence in male stereotyping in our power-structured society, it is believed that it is easier for mothers to experience their sons as separate from themselves. Thus, girls may have less early experience of independence and autonomy, augmented, of course, to a major extent by female sex-typing in our society; in fact, cultural pressures to build stereotyped female dependent type behaviour is probably the major factor in restricting female autonomy in our society. Further, while psychology, psychiatry, and other literature generally describes mothers as the chief inhibitors of female autonomy, it seems such generalisations are theoretical rather than factual for recent research suggests that it is the father who insists most on sex stereotyped behaviour for his male and female children (Bee, 1978; Phillips, 1980, p 4). Thus, mothers who limit the autonomy of their daughters may more often than not do it in response to paternalistic and cultural pressures, rather than their own psychological needs. Whatever the reason for the restriction on the female child's behaviour, its limitation in middle childhood may lead to more intense separation and identity struggles between daughters and parents during adolescence.

Hence, questions of autonomy for girls continues to be as much a problem in middle childhood as in infancy. Observe mothers and children in any outdoor setting and you will note that girls both play and are kept closer to mothers than are boys. Nancy Friday in *My Mother, My Self*, looks at the mother/daughter relationship in western society and finds it claustrophobically interdependent, based on the strains and tensions of guilt because women are taught at an early age to be extensions of others - their mothers, their families, and their husbands. She also suggests women compete sexually with their daughters from an early age. I suspect that this is derived from the old patriarchal myth that women are always in competition for men, and suggest that research is needed.

General observations in some ongoing research in Sydney, as yet incomplete (Phillips, 1979), suggest that fathers tend often to mistakenly believe their daughters are sexually attracted to them and that they are jealous of other women with whom the father interacts. According to the findings, in general, men use their children, of both sexes, projectively, in this and other ways, much more than women do. These projections are mistakenly accepted as facts, and, in patriarchal society, may easily have become the basis of theories about sexual competition between mothers and daughters. These poorly-researched myths are negative and contribute to divisiveness between mother and daughter, and the expectation that they will compete is built into the self concept and can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. To avoid this, mothers need to think and act positively about mother/daughter relationships and be wary of incorporating such myths into their self view and their views of their daughter and other females. As Adrienne Rich puts it: "Women growing up in a world so hostile to us need a very profound kind of loving in order to learn to love ourselves. But this loving is not simply the old, institutionalised, sacrificial "mother love" which men have demanded: we want courageous mothering. The most notable fact that culture imprints on women is the sense of our limits. The most important thing one woman can do for another is to illuminate and expand her sense of actual possibilities."

This is what mothers can do for daughters.

Enough Mothering

Unfortunately, few women growing up in patriarchal society feel mothered enough because, whereas men may find a substitute mother in their female partner, men are not trained or expected to offer motherly nurturance to their wives and girlfriends. Thus, females are trained to need and give more nurturance than men and get less. The enforced deprivations of this situation are exacerbated by other factors. As men are educated to be aggressive and competitive, and women to develop their emotional, caring and affectional aspects, there is often a partial communication gap, even in the best of marriages. As a result, mothers may turn to their daughters to fill the gap and the child becomes gratifier for affection, close friend, even advisor and minder of the mother's upsets.

This unsatisfied female need for affection in patriarchal society where, even in the best of families, children may be expected to make up for the nurturance not supplied to the mother by the husband, is fraught with a tendency to over-generalisation, for in this situation, recollections of the mother's imperfect parents are likely to be evoked and subtle pressure emerge which may demand of the child that she also make up for dissatisfactions with the mother's own mother. This is a distressingly ambivalent role for the child because, at the same time, the mother expects the daughter to fail her as her own parent

did, and her husband, as nurturer, has. Reversal of mother/child roles is well recognised in psychoanalytic circles and is a problem for all mothers to be vigilant about in themselves; what is not always acknowledged is the frequent socialisation of the male into an inadequate partner, unable to give emotional support and yet demanding of it for himself, for men too, have recollections of non-perfect mothers. They also reverse roles with their children, but this has not been studied at length for obvious reasons.

Often ignoring these crucial factors, the reversal of roles between mother and child is extensively studied and generally condemned in psychoanalytic circles. The condemnation has an educative effect which reinforces a prevailing anger and hostility about the imperfections of mothers in regard to their children. More realistic would be some willingness to accept the fallibility of mothers. Equal parenting and equal sharing of responsibility for children is a positive attempt to deal with the problem.

In arguing for this, I am not talking about abnormal psychology and situations where the mother or father (often overlooked) was indeed seriously deprived as a child and reverses roles with his or her children perpetually and neurotically and is a totally dependent person (Phillips, 1981a). I am talking about the unreasonable demands for motherly perfection in reasonably stable two or one parent families.

Daughters Who Overidentify with Fathers

While most children identify with, and take on some, characteristics and traits of each parent during middle childhood, in some cases, daughters begin to over identify with the father, seeing him as more independent and making less emotional demands. In these situations, some go so far as to take on the father's devaluation of, and contemptuous attitude toward, the mother. Sometimes such daughters have difficulty in growing up and retain a "little girl" relationship to the father. Usually, the father is the larger provider of the family needs, possession, and status, and probably earns more money than the mother. His power, while often hidden in the family, is generally the determining factor in where the family lives because of his employment, times of meals and holidays because of his work schedule, who uses the car and whether and when the mother works. His identity, because he needs to deny his own femininity in order to be masculine, is built out of denying his wife's power and devaluing her to the daughter or son, albeit in indirect ways.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN PRE-ADOLESCENCE

By ten years of age, some children begin to integrate their view of self but it is fairly superficial and defined in terms of helping, trying to do one's best and getting along with others (Bernstein, 1980). In early adolescence the developing self concept is effected by physiological changes and concern about physical appearance; anxiety about appearance may become paramount, judgement by peers about what is right or wrong gains currency and interactions with peers broaden the role models which the adolescent incorporates into the self view (Dacey, 1979; Sebald, 1977; Conger, 1977).

After fifteen years of age appears to be the time when major development in the formation of self identity takes place (Horrocks, 1976). For, by then, adolescents appear increasingly able to recognise personality determinants of

behaviour (Livesley & Bromley, 1973). At this stage, therefore, the adolescent can begin to assess the personality of her parents. Nevertheless, the recognition of the imperfections of parents has begun in pre-adolescence (9-10 years) and the daughter (or son) may begin to be more secretive, less cuddly and co-operative (Phillips, 1979). This typifies the testing for more autonomy as the child continues to develop an independent self and parents often feel unneccessarily rejected at this time. The research suggests that relationships are better when directed toward positive encouragement of autonomy within reasonable limits of developmental capabilities (McCandless & Trotter, 1977); the parent, and particularly the mother, needs to equally assert and maintain her own autonomy.

The later reaches of this development stage (11 - 12) sometimes marks the beginning of the daughter's first open recognition of her ambivalent attitude to her mother although it is not necessarily exposed to the mother as yet. Secret letters and notes may be written about the problem. *The Diary of Ann Frank* typifies some of these early conflicts in a more traditional family.

ADOLESCENCE

Cognitive Development Accelerates Self Concept Development

An important factor in further advances in the development of the self system is the adolescent's ability to differentiate, abstract and integrate due to increased developmental maturity and experience (Montemayer & Eisen, 1977). Whereas the young child could act freely and imitates many roles: mothers and fathers, doctors, nurses, cowboys, Indians, the adolescent needs to integrate what she has learned from these games into a single self system, some aspects of which are exhibited in one context, others in another (Livesley & Bromley, 1973). As she develops the ability to do this she also begins to think more deeply about values, her goals, her abilities (Bernstein, 1980), what she wants out of life and whether she will get a job. The latter, in the context of high unemployment, can be particularly disruptive of the self esteem for it means an aspect of expected identity development is not available. This is an issue very relevant to older adolescents and young adults in contemporary society. Unfortunately, I cannot deal with the psychological implications of unemployment for self esteem and identity development here since it is an enormous topic in itself.

Usually, it is not until late adolescence or early adulthood that the ability to be able to think objectively about oneself and the self of others is sufficiently developed to experience a complete sense of separate identity. This, because the ability involves abstract thought which is usually not fully present until late adolescence; many, of course, are confined by an inability to grasp more than two or three narrow generalisations from other perspectives and hence, their thought processes are limited to the concrete with a consequent constricted view of others throughout their lives. However, theoretically, by 18 or 19 years of age, the teenager should be able to grasp that others are also selves with fears, doubts, and hopes and strengths, that may be similar or different from their own. At this stage, therefore, they should be able to accept the independent selfhood of their mothers. Unfortunately, this separation process in our society is particularly difficult for children and teenagers because the infant the child, the teenager, is seen as primary and the mother as secondary. The mother is seen primarily in the caretaking role and hence, as an object of gratification and frustration, not as a self. This naive, egostistical view of mothers is retained by many throughout their lives. As indicated earlier, this can be particularly marked in early adolescence because of the limited development of abstract thought.

In discovering more about the self concept, the early adolescent (12 - 13 years) usually begins by being critical of the values of salient others, for the ability to differentiate seems to precede that of the synthesis of later adolescence and early adulthood. In early adolescence she thus critically differentiates herself from those closest; this may be the mother because she is more tolerant of the criticisms than the father, or because the daughter feels less autonomously separate from the mother, or because the general denigration of female values makes those of the mother the more salient starting point. However, Erik Erikson's work suggests that if parents are not coming in for some criticism they should be concerned that their adolescent does not feel free to engage in the testing of their ideas and ways. Not to test parental values, and to accept them without question, may be a suppression of the development of self autonomy. At the same time, the parent should not "surrender" but put his or her point of view. This clash of perspectives, according to the research, helps the adolescent to see her views from other standpoints and hence, reduces her egocentricity (Bronfenbrenner, 1977); it increases her ability to see herself objectively and, therefore, assists autonomous identity development.

Identity Development in Adolescence

The adolescent wants not only to know who she is but what she is in the world today, as attested in many of her favourite popular songs. Erik Erikson speaks of identity diffusion (still working out identity), premature identity (falling in with parent's view without question) (1974) and negative identity; in the latter case in contemporary society, adolescents or young adults step outside the prevailing mores and make their own history; this can be seen in those who made their alternative lifestyle at Nimbin or the punks with their brightly coloured hair - at least others turn to look upon them for their difference. This reduces the threat of being a nonentity in today's world; they exist because they are noticed by others or because they have asserted a difference from others.

Female Identity

One of the problems with Erikson's theory (1968) is that while it usefully conceives of some aspects of adolescent identity development in the social context, it retains the outdated view that female identity is dependent on male support. While he describes males as achieving their identity through the typical male stereotypes of autonomy, initiative,and industry, he describes the female as holding her identity in "abeyance" until she finds a man to rescue her from her "emptiness" and loneliness by filling "the inner space". This dependency view of women, while male-oriented, is also socially induced, a point which Erikson fails to discuss.

It is theories and attitudes like this which encourage many female adolescents to still believe their identity depends on partnership with a male. It is understandable because of the prevailing propaganda that this is in the nature of things. However, it creates special problems for mother/daughter relationships. Autonomy for women, it is implied, involves escape from the mother to the protective custody of a male. The separation is encouraged by the general tendency in our society to see the mother in a hostile fashion, and as at basis responsible for all the daughter's difficulties in seeking autonomy. She is thoroughly kept at bay by mother-in-law jokes,once the daughter, in adulthood, becomes more or less permanently aligned with a male partner. Mothers

and daughters in this situation need to face up to the fact that men find friendships between mothers and daughters threatening and, like all jealous people, develop divisive ploys to keep them apart, or ways of making them feel ashamed of their closeness as in the following case:

> Emily was very depressed. "My daughter Anne is getting married. We have discussed it and know this is the end of our close friendship. You can't be loyal to a husband and a mother too." Anne was in tears at the expectation of the rift: "Geoff, my boyfriend, says a girl's mother will never let her go unless the husband is firm and I've got to grow up. He doesn't want her around too often; his mother will be living just down the street from us and he expects we'll have her to dinner two or three times a week."

Mothers and daughters should not need to feel ashamed of their friendship, and should be wary of the many negative influences that try to keep them apart. Autonomy and friendship are possible, and a good friendship should not allow itself to be jealously and destructively described as lack of autonomy.

SEX DIFFERENCES IN PARENTAL RESPONSE TO ADOLESCENT AUTONOMY

Generally, men feel very threatened by the testing and developing autonomy and departure of their offspring. They may become very depressed, feel strongly the ebb of their own sexuality, may compensate by chasing young girls and/or become hostile toward the adolescent, engaging in a power struggle, and belittling the adolescent because they, themselves, feel belittled. In contrast, mothers, long instilled with the nurturing, over-responsible attitude, tend to feel guilty about the rebellious, often rude, cruel, and barbarous behaviour of their adolescent. "What did I do wrong? Where have I failed?" Their self esteem is shattered by the criticism of their adolescent. They are distressed to hear their daughter would prefer to confide in a friend. They try to cope with the adolescent's unreasonable expectation of a perfect, ever-nurturing mother centred wholly on their demands and needs.

At the same time, if they have invested all in their children and have not been true to themselves, by developing their potential and other interests, they may feel a loss of purpose as their adolescent becomes more and more independent. Their own identity, centred wholly on motherhood, may depart with their children, and particularly with the daughter in whom they have invested so much. I have already dealt with the psychological bases and implications of this. The result for many women is depression and despair, loss of self esteem, and an overly dependent attitude which makes the daughter feel more guilty and worsens the conflict.

Female Identity During the Departure of Offspring

Often, female identity comes entirely from within the family. She needs a reciprocating partner, a child, to have any identity. She will cease to exist when her children leave. Those who can get a job at this time, or develop other interests, are not so exposed to risk of this identity disintegration, often labelled as menopause, and ascribed by male practitioners to biological changes rather the psychological ones within the context of the patriarchal society.

Because females are trained more to consider the inner life and emotional relationships, it is usually the daughter rather than the son who feels responsible for the mother in such cases. Where the mother has centred her identity on the family, the daughter may feel that she must destroy her mother's identity if

she is to develop her own. Even so, she may not become a complete identity because many of the independent roles are denied her by men. Other women feel they must rescue their mothers before they can work out their own problems. Sometimes, daughters wish and long privately or unconsciously for their mother's death to free themselves from the guilt occasioned by their leaving the mother to anonymity; another, feeling under-mothered in patriarchal society, may compensate by becoming her mother's mother. In her need for a powerful mother she substitutes herself, but is usually enraged by the conflicts of this reversal of roles brought on by herself.

> Janice had not been her father's favourite daughter. She was recognizably jealous of her brother and her two sisters. Psychotherapy revealed her also intensely jealous of her mother for the attention her father paid her and hostile toward her mother for not making the father love her better. In fact, the mother had remonstrated with the father continually and, according to reliable observers within the family and neighbours, had considerably improved the child's lot. She had also devoted extra love and time to Janice to compensate for the irritation the father sometimes expressed toward her. The father was aware of the problem but described Janice as "too bossy" and "assertive" for his liking. He preferred his more "feminine" daughters. As an adult, Janice adopted a very controlling attitude toward her mother, interfering continually in her affairs, and constantly criticising her. The mother had made a good adjustment to middle age and the departure of her family and had developed a thriving business. Janice resented her independence to such an extent that she began stealing from her mother's firm. Those events led to family therapy. During the therapy Janice began to understand the mother's difficulties and efforts, and why her rage against her father had been projected onto the mother.

Janice's rage was covered by an expressed concern to protect her mother. Daughters like Janice typically become greedy for unconditional love and they feel they did not get enough nurturance from their mothers. This lack of nurturance theme is handed on from generation to generation, distorted by the unrealistic expectations of mothers in a patriarchal society and filling each mother with a sense of inadequacy which the daughter both sees and also incorporates into herself.

MOTHERS AND TEENAGE TYRANNY

Constantly coping with the criticisms of a teenager can have a negative effect on the mother's self concept, perhaps already undermined by the social expectations of her as a female and a mother. In this situation, as in others, she needs to rationally assert herself while at the same time giving the teenager the opportunity to do so.

The Youth Cult

The mother is at other disadvantages which, incidentally, also apply to the father. The youth cult of contemporary society means she is behind in the tastes, fads, crazes, philosophies, religions and values of the younger generation (Sebald, 1977). These are exploited and made super salient by sales promotion and the media. Many mothers (and fathers) put themselves at a disadvantage with their adolescents by trying to join their ranks in dress or habits, and by affecting an exaggerated egalitarianism with them. But the research suggests that adults in doing so are failing to understand that adolescents basically perceive of themselves as inferior. They are likely to look

dow on those who show similar behaviour patterns. What adolescents seek from adults is direction, despite the fact that they protest about it (Sebald, 1977).

Contemporarily, the dilemma of many mothers and fathers is a general feeling of inferiority. The direction of condescension and instruction has changed from parent to adolescent to adolescent to parent. It is reflected in the growing literature available for teenagers on how to deal with parents. The problem is exacerbated by the ghettoising of age in contemporary society. Adolescents mix socially almost entirely with other adolescents. Even young adults, middle aged and old people tend largely to confine themselves socially to their own age group. Thus, unless the adolescent lives in a country town, she (or he) is deprived of a large range of adult models in sexual, vocational and social areas; acquaintance with adults may be limited to parents and teachers and the unfortunate plastic portrayals on television which raise unrealistic expectations of family life, personal appearance and behaviour. Adolescents today are seriously deprived by their lack of exposure to multi-faceted and mature identification figures and models which are necessary for healthy development of the self concept.

The Knowledge Explosion

Mothers (and fathers) have also felt inadequate in the 70s and 80s because the technological and information explosion means they have lost their function as helpers at homework (Sebald, 1977); they have also lost many other educational and advisory roles to do with dress, social behaviour, dating, or sex, due to the youth cult and the fact that adolescents nowadays look to other adolescents for advice rather than their parents.

Migration

In technological society, the constant migration from state to state, or city to city, or country to country, because of employment needs or housing needs, may result in mothers, and particularly the stay-at-home mothers, being isolated in the community, whereas the adolescent, through school contacts, neighbourhood and interest networks may have many more friendships and support systems.

Hedonism

There may also be a fundamental clash of values because the adolescent pursues the currently popular hedonistic lifestyle of "doing my own thing" whereas the prevailing ethic in the older society and, until recently, has been the work ethic, which involves planning for the future, hard work and even deprivation to gain status and material worth. On the other hand, the adolescent may subscribe to the growing conservatism among youth which is, perhaps, at odds with the liberated views of mothers. Rational discussion of differing perspectives again assists identity development.

New Individuation

The new individualism of the young also represents a difference in outlook

between daughters (and sons) and their parents in the 70s and 80s. The adolescent often believes that, if the family does not suit her needs, she has a very good reason to leave. Recent Sydney statistics suggest that one in fifty teenagers run away every year. The new young also do not derive their status from their family but make their own.

> Cheryl was the daughter of a well-known barrister. She was herself headed for a legal career until she dropped out of university and moved to a country area to work on a small farm with friends. She is now back in the metropolis happily working as a gardener with a large institution. Her feminist friends admire her greatly for invading the all-male domain and doing what she likes best and well. Her mother and father are most apologetic for the way she earns her livelihood.

Manipulation

Thus, exploited and pushed by business into a leading role as consumers and setters of fashion in dress, music or philosophy, the contemporary adolescent is in an advantageous position to manipulate the older generation. Angry at being made to feel inferior to adults, teenagers do their best to make adults feel inferior and, in the last decade, they have been rather successful.

This saga of change which appears to put mothers and, indeed, both parents, at a disadvantage is often exacerbated by the negativism of the media's pursuit of the "generation gap", without the benefit of reliable research. In fact, the research suggests that, apart from areas which can be related to consumer exploitation and excessive conformity to peer interests before autonomous self development is achieved, adolescents ultimately tend to retain fundamental parental values (Connell et al, 1975; Le Francois, 1976).

Clash of Inferiority Complexes

Several studies suggest that the adolescent/parent conflict is a clash of inferiority complexes (Marcia, 1967; Sebald, 1977). Contemporarily, parents feel inadequate in the parenting role and adolescents tend to feel inferior in coping with major problems of developing autonomy and identity. In a state of self uncertainty, confusion and frustration, adolescent behaviour is often compensatorily brash and arrogant, even bullying (Sebald, 1977). Grace and Fred Heckinger in *Teenage Tyranny* have accused modern society of surrendering to superficial teenage tastes and barbarisms. They believe the young profess an interest in improving society but actually show only a parasitic interest, while vociferous for individuality are actually conformist, and are quick with moral severity when it comes to adults, but exhibit irresponsibility in their personal lives (1963). The backlash in this description is typical of much of the current research. It grows, in part, out of societal and parental frustration as discussed in the next section. This applies as much to sons as it does to daughters.

PARENTING IN ADOLESCENCE

Baumrind (1978) found that parents who had the egalitarian or extremely democratic approach in bringing up their children tended to be most dissatisfied with their adolescents, although the suggestion is that these reltionships with democratically raised children improve considerably and satisfactorily once the

autonomy seeking rebelliousness of adolescence and young adulthood is over. The psychological reasons for this are many, but the most obvious probably is that the democratic parent has encouraged the child to evaluate adults as well as themselves. To test and to be rebellious toward the democratically minded adult is not as threatening as it is in the authoritarian family. Hence, many democratically-oriented parents wistfully envy the sometimes seemingly good order and control of the authoritarian family and wonder if they did the right thing by themselves. In such situations, mothers, or parents, may like to review their objectives in their child's development and the messages they imparted. The following extract from some unpublished case notes is pertinent.

> Joanne, aged 40, was confronted by continual critical assessment of her values and her appearance by her 15-year-old daughter Betty. Betty had also recently dropped out of school complaining that it was a waste of time. Joanne considered the situation, "I daresay I encouraged Betty to be independent, assertive and at ease with adults. It never occurred to me that she would also turn these characteristics and these critical abilities which I admire on me also. I daresay I've got to live with that and learn to assert myself. I daresay I also criticsed the education systems a lotand she's acting out just what I think about it. Now what I've got to get across to her firmly is that despite this, she's got to maximise her abilities, using a poor education system where she can. I daresay I failed to do that earlier, and gave her unclear messages."

Authoritative Parenting

Diana Baumrind believes that the next generation is likely to turn to conservatism, even totalitarianism, because of the inner chaos of their identity development reinforced by the outer chaos of society (1978). As a positive step, Baumrind suggests authoritative parenting as the model which turns out reasonably satisfactory reciprocal parent/adolescent relationships. This is a democratic approach with respectful and demonstrated attention to the adolescent's needs and opinions, and provision of consistent security and love, but with final and rational decisions being made by parents. Diana is a case in point:

> Geoff, a labourer, and Jean, a shop assistant, had hoped their adolescent daughter Diana, would study to be a teacher and find more interesting work and more economic security than they had experienced. Diana did, in fact, complete her Higher School Certificate and then insisted she did not want to study any more. She wanted to be a carpenter. Geoff and Jean were deeply disappointed because of their own expectations, but paid careful attention to Diana's arguments and presentation of her needs. They gave her six months to prove she meant it, and was good at it. She went to technical college. After six months she brought home an excellently designed coffee table. "O.K." said Geoff, "as long as you continue to be good at it, I'll support you." Diana has now graduated to colonial dressers. Geoff explained that had she not shown application he would not have paid the technical school fees and other support necessary and been more directive about her vocational training.

Permissiveness

The story contrasts with parents who do not set limits, who do not inspire their offspring with reasonable expectations of what they may do to fulfill

themselves, and who do not listen to the adolescent's arguments. Psychiatrist Bruno Bettelheim suggests that over-permissive or indifferent parents, just as parents who are too authoritarian, may create senseless uncertainty in their adolescents about their identities and that this generates resentment and conflict between parents and adolescents, mothers and daughters (Sebald, 1977, p 127).

In summary, the research suggests that where the mother has a good sense of autonomy and demonstrates an affectional respect for the same in her daughter, then the mother/daughter relationships are reasonably viable. The risks to such relationships have been discussed in this paper.

IV SOURCES FOR HELP

When seeking help for mother/daughter relationships the following facts should be considered.

Sex Bias in Counselling

The emotional health of female clients is contingent on their being treated by counsellors who respect women and are sensitive to their emotional needs (Buczik, 1981). Buczik found that, although women do not present more complaints related to family and social relationships than men, male counsellors ask more questions concerning these roles of women than they do of men, suggesting expectations of stereotyped female behaviour. Buczik also found that both female and male counsellors recall fewer facts relating to female clients. Similarly, Armitage, Schneiderman and Bass (1979) found that physicians attach greater importance to complaints of male patients than to complaints of female patients. These and other studies suggest the possibility that similar kinds of devaluations of female client's concerns may occur in most counselling processes.

Although the research generally suggests that women are able to empathise more than males (Abramovitch, Abromovitch & Weitz, 1976) we should be aware that there is a strongly male bias in psychological and pschyoanalytic theories and approaches (Phillips, 1981b). Thus, even where the therapist is a woman and trying hard to empathise with her client, she may unwittingly be using a male yardstick for a female problem. Some of the feminist writers are also unconsciously guilty of this (e.g. Nancy Chodorow). Finally, Broverman et al (1970) have shown that many therapists, both male and female, have different standards of mental health for men and women. They require women to be more submissive, emotional, sensitive, dependent, and less competitive.

POSITIVE STEPS

The following are suggestions only; they have worked differently for different people - you may have tried some already - if not, choose what suits your personality and situation best.

1. Be aware of how much your concept of self is influenced by myths which are hostile to females and divisive of mother/daughter relationships.

2. Ensure that your husband or partner shares in infant and child care and nurturing, frustration and discipline for the reasons discussed in the paper. Respect for both sexes is important to good family life and healthy

self concept development. Increase the communication level gradually.

3. According to the level of developmental understanding encourage your daughter to discuss herself as a person and listen. Ensure that you also tell her how you feel as a person. Mutually discuss with her the limits there should be to the demands on you as a mother and her as a daughter. There is no perfect mother - there is no perfect daughter. These discussions can become more abstract and lengthier in adolescence. A positive emphasis is the most fruitful. Guilt and blaming should be avoided. At the older level you can more widely demonstrate and explain your separateness, your individuality, your character, personality, and achievements.

4. Discuss openly with your daughter the pressures to antagonism between females and especially between mothers and daughters. Base your discussion, where possible, on well chosen books, articles, films, and social influences rather than individual blame. Gear your discussions to the appropriate developmental level.

5. Read as much as you can about child and adolescent development, form reading discussion groups and ensure that you do everything you can to develop and respect your own autonomy and that of your daughter.

6. Consciousness raising groups. Mothers of adolescent girls in particular, need to stop being secretive and guilty about their problems, but share them with others in a similar position. They can educate themselves on the psychological basis of mothers and daughter relationships and be critical of male bias in the theories and the current social pressures which may indirectly make them feel inadequate.

7. Self Esteem. Find out more about how the self concept develops and the nature of self esteem. Use the Unit for Child Studies programmes but extend them into areas for especially raising female self esteem and work on them in your family, with your daughter, in your workplace, and among your friends. Develop your self confidence and that of your daughter. Learn to believe in yourself and your ability and encourage your daughter similarly.

Transcript of seminar given at the
Unit for Child Studies, School of Education
University of New South Wales
Friday, 24th July, 1981.

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